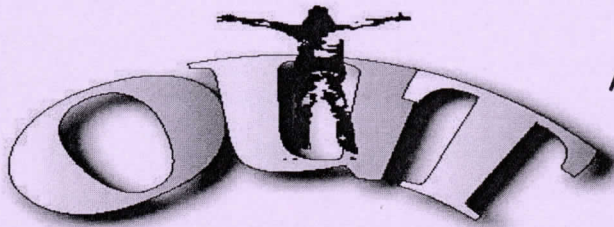


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Affirmation

United Methodists for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Concerns

May 1, 2008

General Conference 2008 Fort Worth, TX

Issue #9

No Progress On Human Sexuality Paragraph in Social Principles

By Gary Shephard
Affirmation Newsletter
Staff

It was much like a root canal that went on longer than expected with the anesthetic wearing off with no way to signal the dentist. Amendments to the majority

report. Amendments to the minority report. Points of order. Arguments for. Arguments against. All afternoon it dragged on.

As of the Affirmation newsletter deadline, the majority report on 161.G was replaced by the minority

report, and the minority report was approved.

While we had hoped that this indeed might be the year when this paragraph might change, we find that the heart of the majority is not yet with us. This, however, was not the

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Observations From Someone New to General Conference

by Tina Seitz

During the first few days of General Conference, I had the great honor of working with a highly dedicated group of people trying to make our church what it should be: a church that accepts everyone. I have belonged to other denominations, but needed to leave because they could not accept me as a transgender woman. I decided to investigate the UMC because of the recent stories where the Rev. Drew Phoenix was reaffirmed in his elder status after having

transitioned into living as the man he was always intended to be. Due to some of the activism I was involved with in my home town near Detroit, I was given this opportunity to work alongside all the dedicated people trying to make a difference on everyone's behalf. I had only a short time that I could spend with all of you, and my biggest regret is that I could not stay longer to help in this great cause.

I have given speeches on what it means when a church is not

(Observations...Continued on page 3)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Pastoral Care

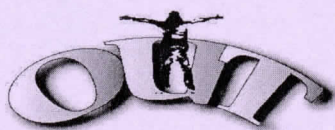
Support Line 612-353-7445 thru end of GC

Breakfast – Every day from 7:30 – 8:30 AM. First Christian Church. Last breakfast Sat 5/3.

Lunch – Every day from 12:00 – 2:30 PM. First Christian Church. Last lunch Fri 5/2.

MFSA Speaker series - Every day from 1:15 – 2:00 PM, First Christian Church

Reconciling Closing Communion Fri 5/2 after GC ends. Late. General Worth Square.



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Articles for the newsletter or comments may be sent to AffirmationNewsletter_at_yahoogroups.com.

Co-Editors:

Gary Shephard and Judy WestLee

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Mission Statement

As an independent voice of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer people, Affirmation radically reclaims the compassionate and transforming gospel of Jesus Christ by relentlessly pursuing full inclusion in the Church as we journey with the Spirit in creating God's beloved community.

Adopted January 2005

* Note: substitute the symbol "@" for the letters "_at_" in the email addresses.



We're Not Your Punching Bags

[Editor's note – this article has to be anonymous to protect the identity of one district's Board of Ordained Ministry.]

"The Opportunity to be threatened, humiliated and to live in fear of being beaten to death is the only 'special right' our culture bestows on homosexuals." – Diane Carman, *Denver Post* (This quote comes from the hatecrime.org web site with Dennis Shepard's statement to the court on 11/04/1999.)

The above quote just happened across my path one day. The most interesting things wander by when you're living with someone in grad school.

This grad student, for your information, is my partner of almost 23 years, a pre-96 deacon that severed his connection to the UMC when he felt it was becoming increasingly hostile to us homosexuals. After an interim career in social service and a long career in data processing, however, the call to be helping people never left. When the district Board of Ordained Ministry failed by one vote to reconnect him to his conference, he decided to become a Licensed Professional Counselor. With his age, course load, and vision challenges we have no

idea how long he'll get to counsel once he has his degree and his license.

That brings me back to the quote my favorite grad student brought home.

Stop using us for your verbal punching bags. *"But we're only speaking our beliefs,"* I hear you say.

Your beliefs hurt people. How Christian! No less than the pistol whipping delivered to Matthew Shepard, your words

"The Opportunity to be threatened, humiliated and to live in fear of being beaten to death is the only 'special right' our culture bestows on homosexuals."

cause injury, depression and deep psychological wounds. You cause untold injury to vulnerable people. Not to all of us, fortunately. Me personally? I hear your

language and I dismiss you as not worth my time. Hurt me? Hurt my partner? You wish. Still, there are fragile people out there and you're hurting them.

Give the language a rest. I won't tolerate it in my presence. I'll tell you to keep your opinion to yourself because I've heard it, I've heard it from better than you, and I doubt you have anything new to add to the argument.

And for the other lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender and queer persons here at GC

(Punching Bags...Continued on page 3)



(Observations...Continued from page 1)

fully inclusive, what message that sends out to society. There are too many youths living on the street because their parents' church said they were sinners for being lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual or queer. There are beatings that happen every week, and already five murders in our country this year of LGBTQ people just trying to be who they were born to be. Why aren't they accepted? The church says they are sinners. These beatings and murders rarely make the news because society doesn't care about LGBTQ people. Society feels as if we don't matter, that our lives are meaningless because of whom we are, because this is the message the church tells society.

This is why your work in Fort Worth is so very important.

It's time for our church to say that we do matter, that we are of sacred worth. It's time for the UMC to stand as one and tell society that the harassment, the beatings, and the murders must end. It is time for the UMC to be fully inclusive of all LGBTQ people at all levels.

Since I joined my church, I have been welcomed within my congregation. In Fort Worth, I was again welcomed by all the people from the many advocacy groups working together for full inclusion. I wrote this to say thank you to all of you, because regardless of what happens for the rest of General Conference, all of you changed my life forever, and know that the work you do is truly the work of the Lord.

Thank you all.

This 'n' that

Unfortunately we can't cover everything that happened Wednesday in the Thursday newsletter. At some point we need to finalize this thing so we can get on with production of the next day's newsletter. We hope to have full coverage of the Wednesday sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression issues in the Friday newsletter. That will be our last newsletter produced at General Conference, and we hope we can make everything fit.

Meanwhile, if you've been touched by a story in our daily GC newsletter, you feel we've done something particularly well or we've screwed up really badly, let us know. We really do appreciate comments; written and verbal. Please send written comments to AffirmationNewsletter_at_yahogroups.com. (Replace the `_at_` with `@`, of course.)

Judy WestLee
Gary Shephard
Co-Editors

Quote of the Day: *"Human beings are perhaps never more frightening than when they are convinced beyond doubt that they are right."* - Laurens van der Post, explorer and writer (1906-1996)

(Punching Bags...Continued from page 2)

I urge you to do the same thing. If someone starts running us down in your presence, with the utmost respect tell them you've heard it and it's time to give it a rest. And for our supporters, and our friends, and our parents, and yes, our children too, I urge you to step forward. Be respectful but firm.

This is our reality. We were born lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer. We're here. We're confident of our salvation. And we're not your punching bags. Show a little respect to your fellow Christians.

(No Progress...Continued from page 1)

major change we were looking for at this GC.

We did make a few improvements in other areas.

As of the April 30 press deadline we're still waiting on the church membership decision, and we're still waiting on the transgender issues.

Unfortunately we can't hold the newsletter waiting for the evening session. We'll have a full report in our Friday newsletter.



INCARNATION

Truly

Thirty to forty percent of homeless youth were thrown out or had to leave their homes because they are homosexual.

I tell you,

Homosexual youth commit suicide at a rate that is two to three times higher than the rate for other adolescents.

just as you did it

Parents lose custody of their children and visitation rights because they are lesbian or gay.

to one of the least of these

Men and women are evicted or burned out of their homes because someone thinks they are gay or lesbian.

who are members of my family,

Gay men and women are routinely beaten up, or murdered, for being homosexual.

you did it unto me.

Jeanne G. Knepper

To The Chair, From The Voiceless

Why?

Why oh God do you call us to sit
here

listening to people

rip the heart out of our lives

as though we don't exist

in this very

in this very

in this very

room?

How

do we see this work as holy

when it desecrates

our lives?

Japanese patriots

herded into camps

from which they volunteered

for service to the nation

that denigrated

their lives.

So, can we continue

to volunteer for service,

to answer your call,

to stand in this place,

not even a target,

because you see

a target?

I recall

Jeanne G. Knepper